

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 233725

FOLLOWING REPEAT ROME 15042 ACTION SECSTATE INFO MILAN NAPLES
15 SEP.

QUOTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 15042

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJECT: SIGNS OF MALAISE SURFACE WITHIN PCI

SUMMARY. TWO INCIDENTS OF PUBLICIZED RESIGNATIONS FROM
THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (PCI) AND PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS
OF VIEWS DIVERSE FROM THE PARTY LINE BY A COMMUNIST
PARLIAMENTARIAN AND A L'UNITA JOURNALIST ARE INDICATIVE
OF A CERTAIN MALAISE THAT HAS DEVELOPED WITHIN PARTY
CIRCLES FOLLOWING THE DECISION TO ABSTAIN ON THE VOTES
OF CONFIDENCE FOR THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER,
AT THIS POINT, GENERAL PARTY DISCIPLINE DOES NOT SEEM
TO BE THREATENED, AND IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO OVER-
EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THESE ESSENTIALLY INDIVIDUAL
ACTS. THE PARTY CAN BE EXPECTED TO INCREASE ITS EDUCA-
TIONAL (PROPAGANDA) EFFORTS TO COUNTERACT THESE TRENDS,
BUT THE LEADERSHIP COULD FACE SOME PROBLEMS IN THE FUTURE
IF THE PRESENT TRANSITORY POLITICAL SITUATION IN ITALY
DOES NOT EVOLVE IN A MANNER FAVORABLE TO THE PCI.
END SUMMARY.

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1. A SERIES OF SMALL, AND ESSENTIALLY INDIVIDUAL,

ACTS SUGGEST THAT THERE IS A BASIS TO REPORTS CIRCULATING WITHIN ITALY THAT THERE IS A CERTAIN DEGREE OF MALAISE WITHIN THE PCI FOLLOWING THE DECISION OF THE PARTY LEADERSHIP TO ABSTAIN IN THE AUGUST VOTES OF CONFIDENCE ON THE ANDREOTTI ONE-PARTY GOVERNMENT. THE FIRST MANIFESTATIONS OF THIS MALAISE CAME IN THE FORM OF DEFECTIONS OF A LIMITED NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS, WHO HELD EITHER LOCAL PARTY OR ELECTED POSITIONS, IN LOCALITIES IN THE PROVINCES OF LA SPEZIA AND NAPLES. IN EACH INSTANCE, THE DISSIDENTS EXPLAINED THAT THEIR RESIGNATIONS WERE MOTIVATED BY THE ABSTENSION ON THE CONFIDENCE VOTES AND THEY COUPLED THEIR ACTIONS WITH REQUESTS FOR MEMBERSHIP IN PDUP. THESE TWO INCIDENTS, WHICH OCCURRED SHORTLY AFTER THE CONFIDENCE VOTES, HAVE NOT BEEN REPEATED ELSEWHERE, TO THE EXTENT THAT WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ASCERTAIN, AND THE PARTY HAS DESCRIBED THEM AS ISOLATED EPISODES INVOLVING ONLY A VERY LIMITED NUMBER OF MEMBERS. AT THE SAME TIME THE PCI, AS A COUNTER BALANCE, HAS PLAYED UP THE MASS DEFECTION FROM THE PDUP RANKS TO THE PCI OF A NUMBER OF LEADING PARTY OFFICIALS IN THE BOLOGNA AREA.

2. A FURTHER EXAMPLE OF WHAT COULD BE INTERPRETED AS A WEAKENING OF PARTY DISCIPLINE WAS AN ARTICLE IN CORRIERE DELLA SERA BY PCI DEPUTY ANTONELLO TROMBADORI, FORMALLY A L'UNITA CORRESPONDENT, CRITICIZING THE LACK OF DECISIVE ACTION ON THE PART OF THE CIVIL AUTHORITIES IN TRANSFERRING TO THE ISLAND OF GIGLIO FOR A PERIOD OF ENFORCE RESIDENCE TWO ALLEGED FASCIST ACTIVISTS IN THE FACE OF OPPOSITION TO THE IDEA FROM LOCAL RESIDENTS. L'UNITA, FOLLOWING A REPORTEDLY LARGE NUMBER OF PROTESTS FROM PARTY LOYALISTS, ATTACKED TROMBADORI'S ARGUMENTS AND STRESSED THAT THE VIEWS HE WAS EXPRESSING WERE PURELY PERSONAL.

3. FINALLY, THE DEATH OF MAO OPENED A MEASURE OF DEBATE WITHIN THE PCI OVER ITS ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY. SPARKING THE DEBATE WAS AN ARTICLE BY L'UNITA'S FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMENTATOR

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ALBERT JACOVIELLO IN THE PARIS DAILY LE MONDE ON SEPT. 11. THE GENERAL THRUST OF JACOVIELLO'S ARGUMENT IS THAT THE PCI MUST BEAR FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR ITS LACK OF MEANINGFUL RELATIONS WITH THE CHINESE AND THAT PCI TIES WITH THE SOVIET COMMUNIST PARTY HAVE PREVENTED IT FROM TAKING THE TYPE OF STEPS NEEDED TO RESUME A DIALOGUE WITH THE CHINESE PARTY. IN A 23 LINE ARTICLE ON SEPTEMBER 13, L'UNITA STRESSES THAT

THE VIEWS JACOVIELLO EXPRESSED ARE SOLELY HIS OWN AND ADDED THAT ONE SEES IN HIS ARTICLE "ONE-SIDED VIEWS AND DEFORMATIONS OF THE LINE FOLLOWED BY THE PCI".

4. COMMENT. WHILE PARTY OFFICIALS DISMISS THE RESIGNATIONS IN THE NAPLES AND LA SPEZIA AREAS AS ISOLATED INCIDENTS AND THE ARTICLES OF TROMBADORI AND JACOVIELLO AS REPETITIONS OF LONG HELD PERSONAL VIEWPOINTS WHICH THE PARTY REJECTS, THESE EPISODES SEEM TO US TO BE REPRESENTATIVE OF A CERTAIN MALAISE WITHIN THE PCI AT THE PRESENT TIME. IT WOULD, HOWEVER, BE A MISTAKE TO OVEREMPHASIZE AT THIS POINT THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THESE ESSENTIALLY ISOLATED INCIDENTS. MOST OBSERVERS CONCEDE THAT THERE IS A CERTAIN ELEMENT OF MALAISE IN THE PCI AS A RESULT OF THE LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF THE PARTY'S ABSTENSION ON THE AUGUST VOTES OF CONFIDENCE. A PCI JOURNALIST, WHILE TAKING ISSUE WITH THE WORD "MALAISE" SAID THAT A VERY VIGILANT BASE OF THE PARTY "COMPREHENDS" WHAT THE LEADERSHIP IS DOING BUT HAS SERVED NOTICE THAT THE PCI SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF BY THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (DC) IN THE CURRENT UNSETTLED AND EVOLVING POLITICAL SITUATION. HOWEVER ONE DEFINES THE FEELING, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT AT THIS JUNCTURE IT PRESENTS ANY THREAT TO THE PARTY LEADERSHIP OR ITS POLICIES NOR DO WE EXPECT A SPATE OF SIMILAR INCIDENTS IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

5. THE CURRENT MALAISE COULD, IN THE LONGER TERM, BRING TO THE SURFACE TACTICAL DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE PCI, PARTICULARLY AT THE LEADERSHIP LEVEL, SHOULD THE PRESENT TRANSITORY POLITICAL SITUATION IN ITALY NOT EVOLVE IN A MANNER FAVORABLE TO THE PARTY. CONSEQUENTLY, THE LEADERSHIP WILL HAVE TO EXERCISE

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EXTREME CARE IN STUDYING ITS POLITICAL OPTIONS AS IT CONFRONTS THE VARIOUS TURNING POINTS OF THE CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION TO ENSURE THAT IT IS ABLE TO MAINTAIN THE PARTY'S FORWARD POLITICAL MOMENTUM. SHOULD THIS MOMENTUM BE STOPPED BY ANY ONE OF A VARIETY OF POSSIBLE FACTORS, I.E. SOLID DC GOVERNMENTAL PERFORMANCE, REESTABLISHMENT OF A COALITION BETWEEN THE DC AND CERTAIN LAY PARTIES, PCI TACTICAL MISTAKES, THEN THE POSSIBILITY FOR INTERNAL TROUBLES WITH THE PARTY INCREASES. FOR THE TIME BEING, THE PCI LEADERSHIP CAN BE EXPECTED TO PROCEED CAUTIOUSLY WHILE AT THE SAME TIME STEPPING UP ITS EDUCATIONAL (PROPAGANDA) EFFORTS AMONG THE PARTY'S BASE TO ENSURE THAT THERE IS THE MAXIMUM POSSIBLE DISCIPLINE AS WELL AS SUPPORT AND UNDERSTANDING FOR THE LINE

WHICH IT IS PURSUING. BEAUDRY UNQUOTE ROBINSON

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